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ABSTRACT

The effects of including both field participation and classroom experience for prospective teachers in an introductory course in education at West Virginia University were compared in this study. Four groups of prospective teachers were randomly selected from a total population of 487 students. Each group consisted of 15 students--freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors--majoring in either elementary or secondary education. Five test instruments were used to measure the prospective teachers' open-mindedness, self-actualization, self-concept, relationship to students, and degree of inclusion. After pretesting, Group A was assigned field participation; Group B was given classroom experiences; Group C was assigned field participation similar to Group B; and Group D received neither field participation experiences nor classroom experiences. Posttests using all test instruments were administered. Results indicated significant trends toward a concurrent arrangement of both field experiences and classroom experiences for prospective teachers as a means of effecting perpetual changes at an earlier period in the teacher education program. (MJM)

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A STUDY OF FIELD PARTICIPATION AND CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES AND THEIR EFFECTS UPON THE PERCEPTIONS OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

Robert Bryan Ba-tos

During his professional life, a teacher is involved in relationships with his students, his colleagues, his administrators, the parents of his students and other persons in the community. Restrictions are laid upon his behavior in these relationships. Those with whom he associates expect certain things of him because he is a teacher. These expectations are regarded as the professional requirements of his position. But the teacher is also a person. Consequently, he has personal relationships with these widely disparate types of persons.

A teacher is a real person and when he enters into a relationship with the learner without presenting a front or a façade, he is much more likely to be effective. American Education has moved increasingly towards a more humanistic philosophy which finds expression in practices designed to facilitate and assist learning rather than to control and direct it.

There is a need for the investigation of interpersonal relationships between teachers and pupils. This need dictates a concern for the inner life of the prospective teacher. This need is a process of learning about teaching and an understanding of himself and his relationship with students in the learning process.

If teacher preparation programs are to be concerned with changing the perceptions of prospective teachers so as to bring about a more humanistic attitude, the question of when these modules of preparation for change

should be presented and in what manner they should be presented becomes an important variable to be considered.

The major objective of this study was to compare the effects of presenting both field participation and classroom experiences to prospective teachers in an introductory course in education at West Virginia University. The study tested the hypotheses that either field participation or classroom experiences or the combination or elimination of both would not affect the prospective teacher's perceptions regarding:

1. degree of open-mindedness
2. degree of self-actualization
3. self-concept
4. relationship to his students
5. degree of inclusion, control and affection

Four groups of prospective teachers were randomly selected from a total population of 487 students enrolled in Curriculum and Instruction 7, an introductory course in education. Each group consisted of 15 students, majoring either in secondary or elementary education and consisting of freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors. All of the subjects were given a pre-test using all test instruments prior to receiving any treatment.

The test instruments used in this study were selected to measure those perceptions indicated previously. They included:

1. Rokeach Dogmatism Scale
2. Personal Orientation Inventory
3. Tennessee Self-concept Scale
4. Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory
5. Fundamental Interpersonal Relation Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B)

After pre-testing of all groups was completed, the prospective teachers in Group A were assigned field participation experiences for a ten-week period. This consisted of two hours per week in some type of field experience. During this period of time they were to receive no classroom experience. Prospective teachers in Group B were given classroom experience over a ten-week period, but were not assigned to any field participation experiences. Classroom experiences consisted of two-hour blocks over a ten-week period. Prospective teachers in Group C were assigned field participation experiences for a ten-week period. The field experiences were similar to those administered to Group B. Prospective teachers in Group D received neither field participation experiences nor classroom experience over the ten-week period and were the control for this study.

Prospective teachers in all groups were administered post-tests using all test instruments. The hypotheses concerning prospective teacher perceptions were tested by means of the analysis of variance test statistics. The results of these findings showed little statistically significant difference among or within the groups. There were, however, trends showing gains in mean scores within the groups in many of the variables tested.

An analysis of growth patterns indicates that since the act of teaching involves working with people, a logical assumption can be made concerning the treatment in which both components--field participation and classroom experience--were utilized. This involves giving the prospective teacher enough classroom theory so that he is able to conceptualize a basic theoretical foundation regarding how a teacher should teach. Secondly, when this foundation is conceptualized, the prospective teacher must be presented

with opportunities to practice the basic beliefs he perceives regarding the act of teaching. The results of this study indicate that the most positive growth occurred when both components (theory and practice) were presented during the same semester of the prospective teacher's college training.

The results of this study seem to show two clear implications:

1. Programs can be started at an earlier stage in a prospective teacher's training that will facilitate both theory and practice if they are administered concurrently.
2. Programs must continually be designed during a prospective teacher's training to give him the opportunity to experience many practical applications of theory-related ideals.

Programs at the freshman, sophomore, and junior years, therefore, must be developed that will give the prospective teacher what he needs in terms of perceptual development. This may necessitate multiple programming on an individual basis with each prospective teacher determining with an advisor those experiences, both class and field, which will best facilitate the successful use of humanistic training in his professional experiences.

Perhaps teacher-training programs should focus their attention more on arranging programs that are continuous, not over just one semester, but for all the semesters that the prospective teacher is in school. A reinforcing program such as suggested may tend to bring about perceptual change at a more rapid rate with a greater impact on the prospective teacher.

It may be found that the types of field experiences prospective teachers receive are not of a nature that will facilitate perceptual change over a short period of time. This possibility leads this author to suggest that programs planned to incorporate field experience should be supervised in a manner

that would assure maximum experience in field participation. These experiences can be an important part of a teacher-training program if they meet the objectives of the total program. Teacher educators must fashion new and powerful tools appropriate to the objectives of the programs.

The types of field participation suggested earlier could become more effective if those people working with prospective teachers were known to have positive perceptions in those areas which the academic experiences were designed to develop. This suggests a training program for supervision of field participant supervisors in those areas of perceptual development.

In summary, the evidence of this study shows significant trends toward an arrangement of concurrent field and classroom experiences for prospective teachers at an earlier period in the student's training as a means of perceptual change.